United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1112
2 April 1992

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council strongly condenms attacks against Venezuelan Embassy in Tripoli and demands that Libya pay full compensation to Venezuelan Government; Secretary-General decides to send Vladimir Petrovski as his Special Envoy to Tripoli.

+ Secretary-General deplores yesterday's violent clashes in southern Gaza Strip town of Rafa and nearby refugee camp, resulting in killing and wounding of several Palestinians.

+ Secretary-General's Special Representative in Cambodia submits draft electoral law to the Supreme National Council; United Nations Development Programme launches major road reconstruction efforts in Cambodia to accommodate repatriation operation.

+ Committee on Information continues debate of proposals to integrate United Nations information centres with offices of United Nations Development Programme.

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The Security Council today strongly condemned the violent attacks on and the destruction of the premises of the Embassy of Venezuela in Tripoli that took place earlier today and has demanded that Libya pay the Venezuelan Government immediate and full compensation for the damage caused.

At a formal meeting, called by Venezuela, the President of the Council, Simbarashe Simbanenduku Mumbengegwi (Zimbabwe) read out a statement on behalf of Council members in which the Council said the seriousness of the situation was underlined by the fact that the intolerable and extremely grave events had been directed not only against the Government of Venezuela but also in reaction to a Security Council resolution (748 [1992]). The statement said any suggestion that those acts of violence were not directed against the Government of Venezuela but against Tuesday's resolution was "extremely serious and totally unacceptable".

(more)

The Council demanded that Libya take all necessary measures to honour its legal obligations to ensure the safety of international personnel and to protect the property of all diplomatic and consular premises in Libya from acts of violence and terrorism.

This morning, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called in Libya's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Ali Ahmed Elhouderi, to protest the attacks against the Venezuelan Embassy.

The Libyan Ambassador presented his Government's apologies to the United Nations for "this deplorable incident". He confirmed that he had extended similar apologies to the Permanent Representative of Venezuela to the United Nations. The Ambassador informed the Secretary-General that the Libyan Government had appealed for restraint and for the safeguarding of the security of foreign embassies and their staff.

The Secretary-General said he trusted that all measures would be taken by the Libyan Government to ensure the safety and security of foreign embassies and their personnel, of United Nations staff currently serving in Libya and of all foreigners residing in that country.

Meanwhile, Mr. Boutros-Ghali has decided to send Vladimir Petrovski as his Special Envoy to Libya in an effort to continue to seek the cooperation of the Libyan Government to provide a full and effective response to the Security Council's resolution 731 (1991).

The Secretary-General said that the incidents which occurred in Tripoli reinforced the importance of such a mission.

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The Secretary-General has issued a statement deploring yesterday's violent clashes in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafa and the nearby refugee camp which resulted in the death and wounding of several Palestinians. He said the incidents were yet another tragic illustration of the dangers inherent in the "long, drawn out Palestinian-Israeli conflict".

The Secretary-General appealed for an end to the bloodshed and expressed the hope that the present tensions would not escalate into further violence. At a time when negotiations aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Arab/Israeli conflict were underway, this tragic situation could only serve to hamper that process.

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The Secretary-General's Special Representative in Cambodia, Yasushi Akashi, has submitted a draft electoral law to the Supreme National Council (SNC) -- the legitimate body and source of authority in Cambodia. The members of the Council will examine the draft and offer their comments at their next meeting.

(more)

During his meeting with the SNC in mid-March, the Special Representative stressed that free elections scheduled for spring 1993 would mark the beginning of a new era. He stressed that the Cambodians themselves must be responsible for the ultimate success of the elections by actively participating in the democratic process.

During the meeting, the parties agreed that the United Nations Transition Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) would provide a direct line of communication between the factions and the Force, effective as of 1 April. The first phase affords hand-held radios operating among SNC members, the Special Representative and the UNTAC Force Commander in Phnom Penh. Later phases are to add telephone and mobile phone service to this hot-line.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has designed and launched a massive emergency road rehabilitation plan in Cambodia to rebuild the main arteries for transporting the 370,000 Cambodian refugees returning from border camps in Thailand.

With the impending heavy rains in August and the expected arrival of tens of thousands of bus loads of returning refugees from Thailand over the next year, road construction crews are racing against time.

The Government of Sweden has pledged $5 million to UNDP for the immediate rehabilitation of roads which are marred by mud and mines. UNDP will be contracting the UNTAC Thai Battaillion for the rehabilitation of a 70-kilometre strech which runs from Sisophon to Battambang. The total programme is expected to cost $15 million.

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The Committee on Information today continued its exchange of views discussing proposals to integrate United Nations information centres with offices of UNDP and issues relating to the role of international media organizations.

Speakers generally supported a reappraisal of the centres, but asked for more information about financing, criteria for integration with UNDP and the status of individual centres. Some speakers urged that centres be maintained as independent entities and others suggested that the financing needed to establish new centres could be obtained by economizing in other areas.

Speakers also expressed the view that even while information technologies had advanced, an information gap still existed between developed and developing countries. One representative expressed the view that news of interest to developing countries was often ignored by international media conglomerates.

During its debate, the Committee has focussed on activities of United Nations information centres and criteria for their establishment. The representative of Portugal, speaking on behalf of the European Community, said the establishment of new centres should be based on a coherent global assessment of their role and location. The Committee should pay particular attention to the efficiency of existing centres, and to communication with local information and educational institutions and non-governmental organizations.

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